PERFORM SALAH CORRECTLY

By
Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani

Translated By
Professor Muhammad Shameem

Quranic Studies Publishers
(Maktaba Ma'ariful Qur'an)
Karachi-14, Pakistan

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Introduction

Salah is a pillar of *Din.* Doing it just right in accordance with *Sunnah* is the responsibility of every Muslim. Unfortunately, we go about performing the cardinal dictates of *Salah* in a carefree manner following our whims, hardly caring to see that those dictates have to be carried out in the manner they were passed on to us by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This is why most of our *Salah* offerings remain deprived of the gleams and blessings of *Sunnah,* although, following these dictates just right hardly takes any more time or labour. What is needed is a touch of concern. If we give a little time and some attention, learn the correct method and make a habit of it, then the time that we spend in making our *Salah* today would remain the same yet the *Salah* thus performed would have the advantage of having been made in accordance with *Sunnah* and its rewards and merits and its gleams and blessings would be much more than what you experienced earlier.

The revered Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, took great care while performing each single unit of the act of *Salah*, and while doing so, they continued learning about the *Sunnah* of the Prophet from each other.

With this need in view, this humble writer had explained to a gathering the *Sunnah* method of *Salah* as mentioned by the Hanafi jurists and had pointed out to incorrect practices which seem to have gained currency. By the grace of Allah, the listerners found it very beneficial. Some friends wished to make this discourse available as a printed brochure so that a much larger number of people would be able to use it to their advantage. So, in this brief write-up, the objective is to explain the *masnun* method of *Salah* and the step-by-step way of putting it into practice with due etiquette. May Allah Almighty make it beneficial for all of us and give us the *taufiq* to follow it. *Amin.*

By the grace of Allah, there are a large number of books, big and small, dealing with the percepts of *Salah*. Hence, presenting a comprehensive account of *Salah* problems and rulings is not the objective here, instead, the immediate concern is to relate a few important points which would help synchronize the form of *Salah* with the demands of *Sunnah*. Another aim is to sound a note of

warning against mistakes and shortcomings that seem to have gained a lot of currency these days.

Acting in accordance with the brief words of advice given here will, *Inshallah,* help make our *Salah* fall in line with *Sunnah*, at least in it's outward appearance when a Muslim could humbly submit before his Lord:

ترے محبوب کی یارب! شباہت لے کے آیا ہوں
حقیقت اس کو تو کر دے، میں صورت لے کے آیا ہوں

Lord, here I am,
bearing similarity to Your beloved,
though in form only,
yet hoping --
You shall make it real.

وما توفیقی إلا باللہ، علیہ توکلت والیہ انیب

And what I get to do is by the help and support of Allah, in Him I place my trust and towards Him I turn possionately.

Muhammad Taqi Usmani

Before you begin the *Salah:*

Check the following and be sure that you are doing things the way they should be done:

1. It is necessary that you face the Qiblah.

2. You should stand upright and your eyes should be focused on the spot where you make your *Sajdah.* Bending your neck and resting your chin on the chest is *makruh* (reprehensible). Similarly, standing in *Salah* while your chest is bent down is also not correct. Stand upright in a way that your eyes keep looking at the spot where you make your *Sajdah.*

3. Note that the direction of the fingers on your feet is towards the Qiblah and that your feet also have the same straight stance facing Qiblah. (Placing feet tilting to the right or left is contrary to *Sunnah*). Both feet should be in the direction of the Qiblah.

4. In between both feet, there should be a minimum span of four fingers of the hands as ready measure.

5. If you are making your *Salah* with *Jama'ah* (congregation), make sure the line you are standing in is straight. The best method to make sure that the line is straight is that each person positions the farthest end of both his heels at the farthest end of the prayer-rug or at lines that mark out one rug from the other.

6. While in *Jama'ah,* satisfy yourself by making certain that your arms are close to the arms of those who are standing on your right and left and that there is no gap in between.

7. It is impermissible, under all conditions, to let the lower portion of your dress cover your ankles. It is obvious that its repugnance while standing for *Salah* increases much more. Therefore, be sure that the dress you are wearing is higher than your ankles.

8. Sleeves should be full, covering the whole arm. Only hands remain uncovered. Some people make their *Salah* with sleeves rolled up. This method is not correct.

9. It is *makruh* to stand for *Salah* while wearing clothes which one would not normally wear in public.

When you begin the *salah:*

1. Make *niyyah* or intention in your heart to

the effect that you are offering such and such *Salah*. It is not necessary to say the words of the *niyyah* verbally.

2. Raise your hands upto your ears in a way that palms face Qiblah and the ends of the thumbs either touch the lobes of the ears or come parallel to them. The rest of the fingers stay straight pointing upwards. There are some who would tend to turn the direction of their palms towards their ears rather than having them face the Qiblah.

There are some others who almost cover their ears with their hands.

There are still others who would make a faint symbolic gesture without raising their hands fully upto the ears.

Some others grip the lobes of their ears with their hands.

All these practices are incorrect and contrary to *Sunnah*. These should be abandoned.

3. While raising your hands in the manner stated above, say: الله اکبر : *Allahu-Akbar*. Then, using the thumb and the little finge of your right hand, make a circle round the wrist of your left hand and hold it. You should then spread out the three remaining fingers of your right hand on the

back of your left hand so that these three fingers face the elbow.

4. Placing both hands slightly below the navel, fold them as explained above.

When you are standing:

1. If you are making your *Salah* alone, or leading it as Imam, you first recite *Thana':* سُبْحَانَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ...... , then Surah al-Fatihah, then some other Surah. If you are behind an Imam, you only recite *Thana':* سُبْحَانَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ and then stand silent listening attentively to the recitation of the Imam. If the Imam's recitation is not loud enough for you to hear, you should be thinking of Surah al-Fatihah using your heart and mind without moving your tongue.

2. When you are reciting yourself, it is better that you, while reciting Surah al-Fatihah, stop at every verse and break your breath. Recite the next verse with fresh breath. Do not recite more than one verse in a single breath. For example, break your breath at الحمدلِلّٰهِ ربّ العالمين then on الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْم then on مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّيْن . Recite the whole Surah al-Fatihah in this manner. But, there is no harm if, during recitation that follows, more than one verse has been recited in a single breath.

3. Do not move any part of your body without

the need. Stand in peace - the more, the better. If you have to scratch or do something else like that, use only one hand and that too, under very serious compulsion using the least time and effort.

4. Transferring all the weight of the body on to one leg and leaving the other weightlessly loose to the limit that it shows a certain bend is against the etiquette of *Salah*. Abstain from it. Either you transfer your body weight equally on both legs or if you must channel your body weight on one leg, you have to do it in a way that the other leg shows no bend or curve.

5. If you feel like yawning, try your best to stop it.

6. When standing for *Salat*, keep your eyes looking at the spot where you make your *Sajdah*. Abstain from looking to your right and left, or front.

When in *Ruku‘*:

When you bend for *Ruku‘*, watch out for the following:

1. Bend the upper part of your body upto a point where the neck and back nearly level up. Do not bend any more or less than that.

2. While in *Ruku‘*, do not bend the neck to the

limit that the chin starts touching the chest, nor raise it so high that the neck goes higher than the waist level. Instead, the neck and the waist should be in one level.

3. In *Ruku'*, keep feet straight. Do not place them with an outward or inward slant.

4. Place both hands on your knees in a way that fingers on both hands stay open. In other words, there should be space between evey two fingers when you thus go on to hold the right knee with your right hand and the left knee with your left hand.

5. In the state of *Ruku'*, wrists and arms should remain stretched straight. They should not bend, curve or sag.

6. Stay in *Ruku'*, at least for a time during which سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيْم could be said three times calmly and comfortably.

7. In the state of *Ruku'*, the eyes should be looking towards the feet.

8. Body weight should be evenly distributed on both feet and both knees should be parallel to each other.

Returning to the standing position from *Ruku'*

1. While returning from *Ruku'* back to the

standing position, see that you stand straight leaving no sag or droop in the body.

2. In this position as well, eyes should be fixed on the spot where you do your *Sajdah*.

3. There are those who simply make a 'gesture' of rising from the *Ruku'* instead of rising fully and standing upright when it is time to do so and who, in that very state, when their body is still bent downwards, go on to do their *Sajdah* - for them it becomes obligatory that they make their *Salah* all over again. Therefore, abstain from it very firmly. Unless you make sure about having become perfectly straight in your standing position, do not go for *Sajdah*.

When bowing down for *Sajdah:*

Remember the following method when bowing down for *Sajdah:*

1. Bending the knees first of all, take them towards the prayer floor in a way that the chest does not lean forward. When the knees have already been rested on the floor, the chest should then be lowered down.

2. Until such time that the knees have come to rest against the floor abstain, as far as possible, from bending or lowering the upper part of the body.

These days negligence in observing this particular rule of etiquette while getting ready to go for *Sajdah* has become very common. Many people would lower down their chest right from the start and go on to do their *Sajdah*. But, the correct method is what has been stated in #1 and #2 above. Unless it be for a valid reason, this method should not be bypassed.

3. After having rested your knees on the floor, place your hands first, then the tip of the nose, then the forehead.

In *Sajdah*

1. While in *Sajdah,* keep your head in between your two hands in a way that the ends of the two thumbs come parallel to the ear-lobes.

2. In *Sajdah,* fingers on both hands should remain close together, that is, the fingers should be adjacent to each other leaving no space in between them.

3. The direction of the fingers should be towards the Qiblah.

4. The elbows should stay raised off the floor. It is not correct to rest the elbows on the floor.

5. Both arms should stay apart from armpits and sides. Never keep them tucked in.

6. Do not, at the same time, poke your elbows far out to your right and left causing discomfort to those making *Salah* next to you.

7. The thighs should not come incontact with the stomach-wall. The stomach and the thighs should stay apart.

8. During the entire *Sajdah,* the nose-tip should continue to rest on the floor.

9. Both feet should be placed upright on the floor with heels showing on top and all fingers turned flat on the floor in the direction of the Qiblah. Those who cannot turn all their fingers because of the physical formation of their feet, they will still do well to turn them as much as they can. It is not correct to place the fingers vertically on the floor just for no valid reason.

10. Be careful that your feet do not lift off the floor during *Sajdah.* Some people would do their *Sajdah* while none of the fingers on their feet come to rest on the floor even for a moment. This way the obligation of *Sajdah* is not liquidated at all, and as a result, the *Salah* too becomes invalid. Be very particular in abstaining from this error.

11. In the state of *Sajdah,* the least time you can give yourself should be sufficient enought to say سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلٰى three times, calmly and com-

fortably. Raising the forehead immediately after having rested it on the floor is prohibited.

In between the two *Sajdahs*

1. Rising from the first *Sajdah,* sit up straight, on the hams, calmly and comfortably. Then go for the second *Sajdah.* Doing the second *Sajdah* after raising the head just a little bit and without becoming straight is a sin. If one does it like that, it becomes obligatory that the *Salah* be made all over again.

2. Spread out the left foot (like the blade of a hockey stick) and sit on it. Let the right foot stand vertically with fingers turned towards the Qiblah. Some people let both feet remain in upright position and sit on the heels. This method is not correct.

3. While sitting, both hands should be placed on the thighs but fingers should not taper down onto the knees, instead, the far ends of the finger tips should reach only as far as the beginning edge of the knee.

4. While sitting, let your eyes be on the lap.

5. Sit for a time during which سُبْحَانَ اللهِ could be said at least once and if you can sit for a time during which:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اغْفِرْلِیْ وَارْحَمْنِیْ وَاسْتُرْنِیْ وَاجْبُرْنِیْ وَاهْدِنِیْ وَارْزُقْنِی

couldbe recited, it is better. But, reciting this during *Fard* (obligatory) *Salah* is not necessary. It is better to do so in *nafl salah*.

The second *Sajdah* and rising from it:

1. Go on to do your second *Sajdah* in the same manner by first placing both hands on the floor, then the nose-tip, then the forehead.

2. The complete form of *Sajdah* should be the same as mentioned in connection with the first *Sajdah*.

3. When rising from *Sajdah,* first raise the forehead off the floor, then the nose-tip, then the hands, and then the knees.

4. While rising, it is better not to lean for support off the floor, however, should it be difficult to get up from the floor because of body-wight, sickness or old age, making use of the floor for support is also permissible.

5. After you have risen back to your standing position, recite بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ before Surah al-Fatihah in the begining of each *raka'ah.*

In *Qa'dah:*

1. The method of sitting in *Qa'dah* shall be the same as mentioned in connection with the method

of sitting between *Sajdahs.*

2. When you reach اَشْهَدُ اَنْ لَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰه while reciting التحيات raise the *shahadah* finger (the fore-finger or the index finger) with a pointing motion and let it fall back at اِلَّا اللّٰه .

3. The method of making a pointing motion is that you make a circle by joining your middle finger and the thumb, close the little finger and the ring-finger (the one next to it), then raise the *shahadah* finger in a way that it is tapered towards the Qiblah. It should not be raised up straight in the direction of the sky.

4. However, lower the *shahadah* finger while saying اِلَّا اللّٰه , but retain, right through the end, the initial formation of the rest of the fingers you already had when making the pointing motion.

When turning for *Salam:*

1. When turning for *Salam* on both sides, you should turn your neck just enough that your cheeks become visible to the person sitting behind you.

2. When turning for *Salam,* eyes should be towards the shoulders.

3. When turning your neck to the right to say اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللّٰه , make an intention that you are

offering your *Salam* greetings to all human beings and angels on your right. Similarly, while turning for *Salam* to the left, have the intention of offering your *Salam* greetings to all human beings and angels present on your left.

The method of *Du'a*

1. The method of *Du'a* is that both hands be raised high enough so that they come in front of the chest. Let there be some space between the two hands. Do not bring the hands close together nor keep them far apart.

2. When making *Du'a*, keep the inner side of the hands turned towards your face.

SALAH FOR WOMEN

The method of *Salah* described earlier is for men. The *Salah* as offered by women differs from that of men in the following aspects. Women should be careful about what is required of them:

1. Before they begin their *Salah,* women should make sure that their whole body, except the face, the hands and the feet, is covered with clothes.

Some women offer their *Salah* with the hair on their head remaining uncovered.

Some have their wrists left uncovered.

Some women use scarfs so thin or small that their hair tresses are visible dangling down underneath. If, during the *Salah,* any part of the body, even if it be equal to one-fourth, remains uncovered for a time during which one could say سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيْم (*Subhana Rabbi-al-'Azim*) three times, the *Salah* itself would not be valid. However, should the uncovered portion be less than that, *Salah* would take place but the sin

shall stay.

2. For women, making *Salah* in the room is better than doing it in the verandah and doing it in the verandah is better than doing it in the courtyard.

3. While starting the *Salah,* women should not raise their hands upto their ears, instead, they should raise them upto their shoulders, and that too, from within the scarf or other outer wrap being used.

Hands should not be taken out of this cover. (Bahishti Zewar)

4. When women fold their hands on the chest, they should simply place the palm of their right hand on the back of the left forehand. They should not fold their hands on the navel like men.

5. In *Ruku',* women are not required to straighten their backs fully like men. Women should bend less as compared to men.

(Al-Tahtawi 'alal-Maraqi, p. 141)

6. In the position of *Ruku',* men should open up their fingers while placing them on the knees, but women are required that they place their hands on the knees with fingers close together, that is, there be no space between fingers. (al-Durr al-Mukhtar)

7. Women should not stand on legs absolutely

straight, instead, they should stand with knees slightly bent forward. (al-Durr al-Mukhtar)

8. In *Ruku'*, men are required to keep their arms stretched, away from the sides. But, women should stand with their arms close to their sides. (al-Durr al-Mukhtar)

9. Women should stand with both feet close together. Specially, both their knees should just about be joined together. Let there be no separating distance between legs. (Bahishti Zewar)

10. While doing *Sajdah,* the method prescribed for men is that they should not lower their chest until such time that their knees come to rest on the floor. But this method is not for women. They can, right from the start, lower their chest and go for *Sajdah*.

11. Women should do their *Salah* in a manner that the stomach-wall comes to rest against the thighs and the arms stay close to the sides. In addition to that, women do not have to position their feet upright, instead, they should spread them on the floor sliding them out towards the right.

12. Men are prohibited to place their elbows on the floor while making *Salah*. But, women should place the whole arm, including the elbows, on the floor. (al-Durr al-Mukhtar)

13. When sitting between *Sajdahs* and when reciting التحيات (*at-Tahiyyaat*), sit on the left hip, slide both feet out to the right side and let the left foot rest on the right calf of the leg. (at-Tahtawi)

14. Men are required that they be careful about keeping their fingers open when bending for *Ruku'*, and keeping them close together when in *Sajdah*, and then, leave them as they are during the rest of the *Salah*, when they make no effort either to close or open them. But, it is required of women, under all conditions, that they keep fingers close together, that is, leave no space between them. This is required all along in *Ruku'*, in *Sajdah*, between two *Sajdahs* and in the *Qa'dahs*.

15. It is *makruh* (reprehensible) for women to make a *Jama'ah* (congregation). The very act of offering their *Salah* alone is better for them. However, should *mahram*-members of the family be making their *Salah* with *Jama'ah* within the house, there is no harm if they join in with them in the *Jama'ah*. But, in a situation like this, it is necessary that they stand exactly behind men. They should never stand next to them in the same row.

THE MASJID

Some essential rules of conduct

1. While entering the Masjid, recite the following *Du'a:*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِ اللّٰه اللّٰهُمَّ افْتَحْ لِیْ اَبْوَابَ رَحْمَتِكَ

(I enter with the name of Allah and with the prayer that Allah bless His Messenger and bestow peace upon him. O Allah, open for me the doors of Thy mercy.)

2. Immediately on entering the Masjid, make an intention that 'I shall be in *I'tikaf* for whatever time I stay in the Masjid'. By doing so, *Insha'-Allah* the spiritual reward of *I'tikaf* can also be hoped for.

3. Following entry into the Masjid, it is better to sit in the front row. But, in case space in the front has already been taken up, sit wherever you find an opening. Advancing forward by leap-frogging people's necks is not permissible.

4. *Salam* greeting should not be offered to those already sitting in the Masjid and busy in *Dhikr* or recitation of the Qur'an. However, should one of them be not so engaged and looking at you on his own, there is no harm in offering such *Salam* greeting to him.

5. If you have to offer *Sunnah* or *Nafl Salah* in the Masjid, select a spot where there is the least likelihood of people crossing in front of you. Some people start up their *Salah* in the back rows while ample space remains open in the front. Because of this act of theirs, it becomes difficult for others to cross over and they have to make a long detour to reach open sitting spots. Offering *Salah* in this manner is a sin in itself, and should a person happen to cross in front of the person making his *Salah*, then this sin of his crossing over in that manner will also rest on the shoulders of the person making such a *Salah*.

6. After entering the Masjid, if you find that you are there a little ahead of the *Salah* timing, then, before you sit down, make two *raka'ahs* with the intention of *Tahiyyah al-Masjid*. This has great merit. If there is not time for that, you can combine the intention of *Tahiyyah al-Masjid* with in the *Sunnah Salah*. And if, you do not have the time even to make your *Sunnah Salah* and the

Jama'ah is ready, this intention could also be combined with that of the *Fard Salah*.

7. As long as you sit in the Masjid, keep doing *Dhikr*. Specially, keep reciting the following *Kalimah* devotedly:

سُبْحَانَ اللهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ وَلَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللهُ وَاللهُ اَكْبَرُ

Sanctified is Allah and for Allah is all praise and there is no god but Allah and Allah is great.

8. do not engage yourself in unnecessary conversation while sitting in the Masjid and do nothing else that may disturb those devoting to their *'Ibadah* of *Salah* or *Dhikr*.

9. If the *Jama'ah* is ready, fill in the front rows first. If space is open in the front rows, it is not permissible to stand in the back row.

10. From the time when the Imam takes his place on the *Mimbar* to deliver the Friday *Khutbah* right through the end of the *Salah*, it is not permissible for anyone to talk, make *Salah* or to offer *Salam* to anyone or to answer *Salam* offered. However, should anyone start talking during this time, it is also not permissible that he be asked to keep quiet.

11. Sit during the *Khutbah* as you sit in

Qa'dah when reciting *at-Tahiyyat.* Some people sit hand folded during the first part of the *Khutbah* and then place their hands on the thighs during the second. This method is baseless. One should sit with hands on the thighs during both.

12. Abstain from everything that may spread filth or smell in the Masjid or cause pain to anyone.

13. When you see anyone doing something wrong, ask him not to do so, quietly and softly. Totally avoid insulting him openly, or rebuking him, or quarrelling with him.

ISLAMIC MONTHS

Merits and Precepts

By

Justice Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani

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